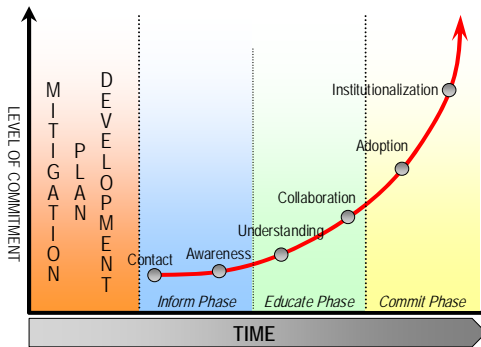# Managing and Leading Change
Understanding Employee Commitment

The Patterson-Conner Commitment Curve, shown at left, represents a map of employee commitment to organizational change and is one framework that can be used to understand AFS employee commitment to new initiatives in system safety. One of your greatest roles as an AFS leader is leading and inspiring employees as they are introduced to new systems, processes, and ideas. Understanding where employees are on the commitment curve can help you identify and support their needs and help them effectively adapt to changes.

The front side of each Management Tip Card is designed to help you identify employee behaviors as they relate to the commitment curve. The reverse side of each card provides management tips related to each stage to help increase employee commitment to system safety.

Management Tip: *Lead by example.*

Understanding Employee Commitment

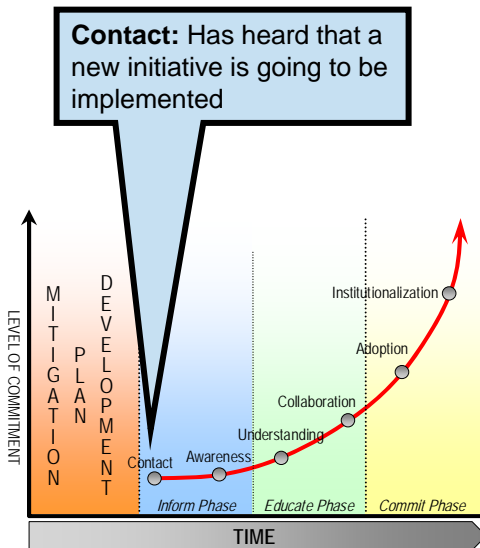| Development Phase	Employee Commitment Stage	Where are my employees on the commitment curve?
***Inform* Phase**	Contact	➢ They have heard about SMS and SAS.
	Awareness	➢ They are aware of SMS and basic safety principles. ➢ They know where to find information on SMS and basic safety principles.
***Educate* Phase**	Understanding	➢ They understand the influence that a transition to an SMS will have on AFS oversight activities.
	Collaboration	➢ They believe that a transition to an SMS will have a positive influence on system safety. ➢ They look for ways to participate in and promote system safety.
***Commit* Phase**	Adoption	➢ They have adopted the updated approach (design assessment, performance assessment and risk management) to system safety into their oversight work.
	Institution-alization	➢ They have successfully applied the new approach (design assessment, performance assessment and risk management) to system safety and recognize the benefits of this new approach.

Employee Commitment:
The Contact Stage

Change creates curiosity. You may notice that employees begin asking questions of each other and their leaders.

Employees begin to ask questions such as, "What is this all about?" "Why are we doing this?" "When will this be implemented?"

What can I do?

Contact: Has heard that a new initiative is going to be implemented

LEVEL OF COMMITMENT

MITIGATION

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Contact

Awareness

Understanding

Collaboration

Adoption

Institutionalization

Inform Phase *Educate Phase* *Commit Phase*

TIME

Management Tip: *Get out of your office.*

The Contact Stage:

Has heard that a new initiative is going to be implemented

When employees are in the contact stage, you can:

- Communicate about the change, sharing as much information as possible.
- Explain the reasons for the change.
- Share any relevant timelines and expectations, so that employees know what to expect.
- Help employees see how they will benefit from the change.
- Tell employees you "don't know" a particular answer, but you will find out and get back to them within a specified amount of time.

Management Tips:

- Exercise patience. All employees will respond differently. Be prepared to handle a variety of responses from employees.
- Employees will not be able to learn all the information about the change at one time. Be prepared to answer the same questions more than once.

Get out of your office!

Take the time to walk around your office. When you do you become more approachable, you get information first hand, and it helps you see what is really happening with your employees.
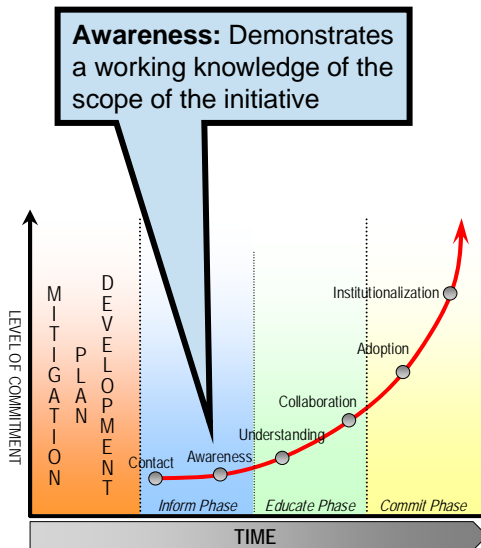
Resource: *Leading Change* by John Kotter, Harvard Business Press, 1996

Employee Commitment:
The Awareness Stage

Depending on an employee's view of change, an employee may display any of the following responses:

Confusion, Anxiety, Shock, Relief, Denial

Employees may begin to ask questions such as, "How will this change impact me and my job?"

What can I do?

Awareness: Demonstrates a working knowledge of the scope of the initiative

Chart labels (left axis, vertical): LEVEL OF COMMITMENT

Vertical phase bands: MITIGATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Data points: Contact, Awareness, Understanding, Collaboration, Adoption, Institutionalization

Phases: *Inform Phase*, *Educate Phase*, *Commit Phase*

TIME

SASO - System Approach for Safety Oversight (AFS-30)
www.faa.gov/about/initiatives/saso/

The Awareness Stage:

Demonstrates a working knowledge of the scope of the initiative

When employees are in the awareness stage, you can:

- Communicate often, share in-depth information, and reinforce previous messages.
- Solicit and address questions and concerns.
- Let employees know that all feedback is appreciated.
- Describe what success looks like.
- Tell employees you don't know a particular answer, but you will find out and get back to them within a specified amount of time.

Management Tips:

- Encourage open and honest feedback; do not shut down discussion even if it is in opposition to the change.
- Allow initial venting, but then direct the employee to a more positive and action-oriented discussion.
- Sometimes the strongest and most vocal opponents become the strongest advocates once they have the answers they need to buy into the change.

You can't listen with your mouth open.

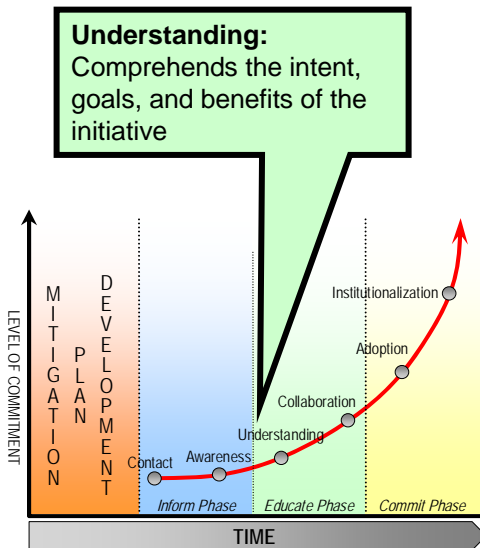Listen to the people around you. You will never learn if you talk all the time.

Employee Commitment:
The Understanding Stage

When employees begin to understand the change, some may see the change as positive and show interest in supporting the initiative while others may perceive the change as negative and display decreased productivity, resistance, confusion, and ambivalence.

Employees will also begin to say such things as, "How can I help?" or "I see some risks associated with this initiative."

What can I do?

Understanding: Comprehends the intent, goals, and benefits of the initiative

LEVEL OF COMMITMENT

MITIGATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Contact
Awareness
Understanding
Collaboration
Adoption
Institutionalization

Inform Phase *Educate Phase* *Commit Phase*

TIME

The Understanding Stage:

Comprehends the intent, goals, and benefits of the initiative

When employees are in the understanding stage, you can:

– Show concern for employees.
– Be visible; keep an open door; walk around.
– Personally commit to the change; show your sponsorship both verbally and by your actions.
– Convey to employees:
  • the reasons for the change
  • what the future state will look like
  • how the change will be implemented and what type of orientation and support the employees will receive
  • what their roles look like and what is expected of them

Management Tips:

– Provide more details as they become available.
– Identify the employees who view the change as positive and get them involved in promoting the change.
– Identify the employees who are skeptical or view the change as negative and ask them what additional information they need.
– Look for opportunities to involve employees in the change process and help you identify risks and benefits.

Leaders create change.

Be prepared for change and its impact on people within, and outside, your group. If you are not making changes, you are not leading.

Resource: *A Leader's Voice: How Communication Can Inspire Action and Get Results*, by Boyd Clarke, 2002
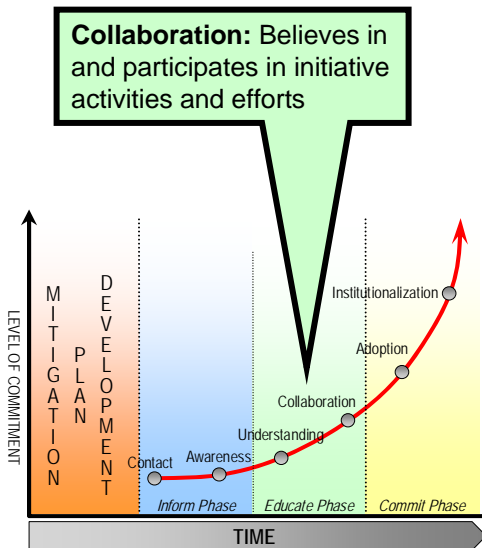
Employee Commitment:
The Collaboration Stage

When employees make a personal commitment to support the change and display renewed energy and enthusiasm, it is often a good time to involve them in collaboration. There may also be some employees who do not wish to commit to the change. Performance measures and fairness of application may be questioned.

Employees begin to say such things as, "I think we should form a new task force to address this" or "Will that change my performance measures?"

What can I do?

Collaboration: Believes in and participates in initiative activities and efforts

LEVEL OF COMMITMENT

MITIGATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Contact
Awareness
Understanding
Collaboration
Adoption
Institutionalization

Inform Phase *Educate Phase* *Commit Phase*

TIME

Management Tip: *Get your people involved.*

The Collaboration Stage:

Believes in and participates in initiative activities and efforts

When employees are in the collaboration stage, you can:

- Clarify and communicate desired behaviors.
- Reinforce, recognize, and reward new behaviors.
- Create frequent opportunities for success and celebration.
- Be consistent in your words and actions.

Management Tips:

- Once team members are personally involved, they can be recruited to encourage others to participate.
- Support employees when they have questions or need solutions, so they can model the new behaviors for others.

Get your people involved.

It's a lot easier to get employees to stand behind an organization's decision if they have the opportunity to participate in the discussion.
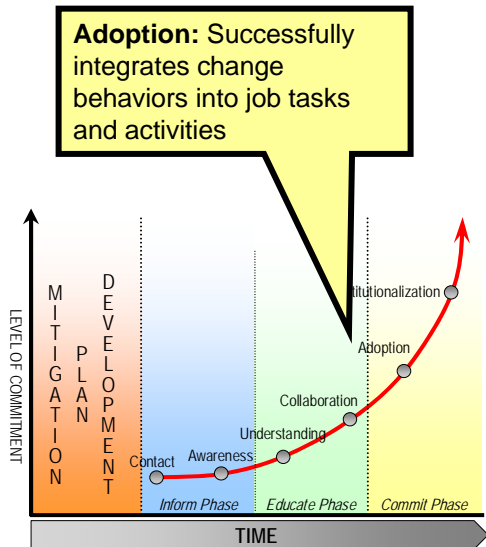
Employee Commitment:
The Adoption Stage

When employees have adopted the new change you will notice that they are using new skills and processes in their everyday work.

You may hear employees saying such things as, "The new system takes longer to use than the old one. Should we allot more time for tasks involving use of this system?"

What can I do?

Adoption: Successfully integrates change behaviors into job tasks and activities

LEVEL OF COMMITMENT

MITIGATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Contact — Awareness — Understanding — Collaboration — Adoption — Institutionalization

Inform Phase — *Educate Phase* — *Commit Phase*

TIME

The Adoption Stage:

Successfully integrates new ideas, behaviors, technologies into job tasks and activities.

When employees are in the adoption stage, you can:

- Ensure that your employees have received the training and support they need to begin feeling comfortable operating under the new business system and processes.
- Continue to reinforce and reiterate the benefits of adopting the new business system and process.
- Communicate successes.
- Communicate resolution of any issues or problems.

Management Tips:

- Be aware that new problems and issues can arise once employees adopt the new system. Be open to discussing any issues that arise.
- This is the "trial period" for the change; therefore some problems are to be expected.
- It is important to remember to track and monitor issues and progress so that you can communicate relevant issues up and down the chain of command.

Fix the problem, not the blame.

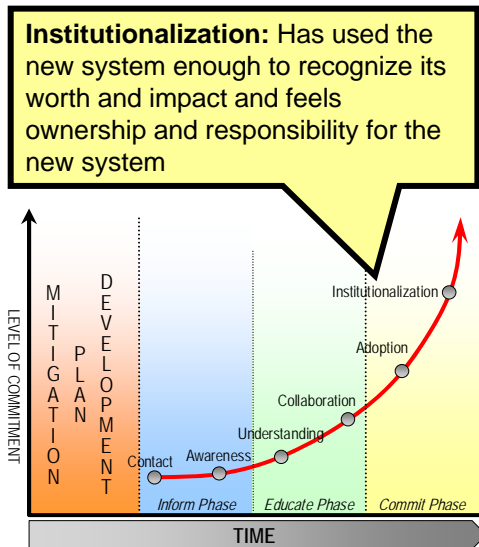It's more productive and less expensive to figure out how to fix a problem than it is to decide who's fault it was.

Employee Commitment:
The Institutionalization Stage

You will notice that most employees are operating as if the new change is the status quo, although there still may be a few who have implemented the change but have not truly bought into it. Enthusiastic employees will begin looking for ways to improve the process even further.

You may hear comments such as, "I can show you how to do that." or "I have an idea to improve upon this system."

What can I do?

Institutionalization: Has used the new system enough to recognize its worth and impact and feels ownership and responsibility for the new system

The Institutionalization Stage:

Has used the new system enough to recognize its worth and impact and feels ownership and responsibility for the new system.

When employees are in the institutionalization stage, you can:

- Communicate progress made and publicly celebrate successes.
- Continue to hold people accountable for appropriate behaviors.
- Challenge the status quo by asking how we can do things better.

Management Tips:

- The change is not over. It will be important to sustain the change by continuing to reinforce key concepts and the new way of doing business.
- Keep a look out for workarounds and other behaviors that support the old way of doing business.
- Continue to monitor morale and possible risk.
- Continue to look for successes and promote positive performance.

Train your supervisors.

The key to business success is employee productivity. The key to employee productivity is their perception of their immediate supervisor. Invest in their training.